

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: POLITICAL RADICALISM IN THE FRG: SOMETHING
TO WORRY ABOUT?

1. SUMMARY: LEFT RADICALISM HAS BECOME A HOT POLITICAL SUBJECT IN WEST GERMANY. THE ABRASIVE, ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT STATEMENTS OF THE JUSOS, THE SEEMING RADICALIZATION OF UNIVERSITIES AND SCHOOLS, LEFTIST GOVERNMENTS AT THE CITY AND COMMUNAL LEVEL--THESE AND RELATED FACTORS HAVE RAISED THE DEBATE TO A PITCH UNPRECEDENTED IN POST-WAR GERMANY. LOOKED AT CRITICALLY, RADICALISM--AND IT IS ESSENTIALLY RADICALISM OF THE LEFT, FOR THE EXTREME RIGHT HAS LITTLE STRENGTH IN TODAY'S FRG--TENDS TO ASSUME LESSER DIMENSIONS THAN THE HEAT OF PUBLIC DEBATE WOULD LEAD ONE TO CONCLUDE. OUR ASSESSMENT IS THAT WHILE LEFTIST RADICALISM IS A PROBLEM AND WILL REMAIN ONE, ESPECIALLY IN THE JUSO WING OF THE SPD, IT IS NOT INTRINSICALLY UNMANAGEABLE. APART FROM ECONOMIC FACTORS, MUCH WILL DEPEND ON THE READINESS OF THE SPD LEADERSHIP IN THE FUTURE TO PROMOTE A MODERATE POLICY THAT WILL APPEAL TO THE MIDDLE-OF-THE ROAD VOTER. WEST GERMAN SOCIETY IS BASICALLY SOUND AND, BARRING ECONOMIC CATASTROPHE, SHOULD BE ABLE TO COPE WITH THE STRESSES AND STRAINS OF THE LEFTIST EFFORTS INCREASINGLY TO POLITICIZE THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SYSTEM. END SUMMARY.

2. QUESTIONS ARE RAISED ABOUT LEFTIST RADICALISM IN THE FRG THESE DAYS FOR VARIOUS REASONS, NOT LEAST BECAUSE RADICALS HAVE BEEN GRABBING THE HEADLINES (THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACTIVITIES OF THE JUSOS, VIOLENCE IN FRANKFURT, THE UNREST IN THE UNIVERSITIES, BAADER-MEINHOF TERRORISM, ETC.). RADICALISM HAS BECOME A SIGNIFICANT DOMESTIC POLITICAL ISSUE. THE CDU/CSU HAS SUCCEEDED IN PLAYING IT UP AGAINST THE BRANDT GOVERNMENT, POINTING TO PROBLEMS OF EMPLOYMENT OF RADICALS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND TO RADICALIZATION OF TEACHING IN THE SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES. RADICALISM HAS BEEN A MAJOR FACTOR IN

RECENT LAND AND LOCAL ELECTIONS MARKED BY HEAVY SPD
LOSSES AND CDU GAINS.

3. POLITICAL RADICALISM IN THE FRG IN 1974 MEANS LEFT
RADICALISM, FOR THE EXTREME RIGHT REPRESENTS NO SERIOUS
PROBLEM. THE CURRENT WAVE OF INTEREST IN HITLER AND
THE NAZI PERIOD DOES NOT REFLECT NOSTALGIA FOR THE
THIRD REICH OR A TURN TO THE RIGHT POLITICALLY. IT
MAINLY REPRESENTS CURIOSITY, ESPECIALLY AMONG WEST
GERMAN 30-40 YEAR OLDS, WHO ARE TOO YOUNG TO HAVE BEEN
DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE NAZI PERIOD. FOR THEM, THIS
PERIOD OF HISTORY STILL NEEDS ANALYSIS AND CLARIFICATION.

4. ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL, AND EVEN MORE AT LAND AND
LOCAL LEVELS, LEFT RADICALS RETAIN A HIGH DEGREE OF
VISIBILITY--BUT PLAY A MINIMAL ROLE IN INFLUENCING
NATIONAL POLICY. THERE ARE EXTREMIST PARTIES: THE DKP
AND KPD ON THE LEFT, AND THE NPD AND DU ON THE RIGHT.
THEIR MEMBERSHIP FIGURES ARE NOT IMPRESSIVE: (THE
DKP HAS ABOUT 40,000; THE KPD, 10,000; THE NPD, 14,000;
AND THE DU, 6,000). NONE IS REPRESENTED IN THE
BUNDESTAG OR IN ANY OF THE LANDTAGS. IN THE 1972
FEDERAL ELECTIONS, THE NPD POLLED ONLY 0.6 PERCENT OF
THE VOTES, AND THE DKP ONLY 0.3 PERCENT. THE KPD AND

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THE DU FAILED TO REGISTER AT ALL. THEY HAVE ALSO FARED
POORLY IN RECENT LAND ELECTIONS IN HAMBURG, SCHLESWIG-
HOLSTEIN AND RHINELAND-PFALZ.

5. THERE ARE, OF COURSE, RADICALS IN THE SPD AND, IN
RELATIVE TERMS, EVEN IN THE OTHER MORE CONSERVATIVE
PARTIES, AND SOME OF THE RADICAL VOTE IS UNDOUBTEDLY
GOING TO THESE RATHER THAN TO THE EXTREMIST PARTIES,
THERE ARE ALSO SOME RADICALS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND
AMONG THE MILITARY CONSCRIPTS. BUT THE MOST VISIBLE
AND PROBABLY ALSO THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM CONCERN-
ING RADICALISM IN WEST GERMANY TODAY IS THAT OF THE

YOUNG RADICAL LEFT WITHIN THE SPD. THE JUSOS OF 1974 ARE DIFFERENT IN KIND FROM THE FAIRLY AGGRESSIVE 1969 JUSO REBELS AND FROM THE OTHER YOUNG SPD REBELS OF EARLIER YEARS. THE JUSOS ARE TOUGH, WELL-ORGANIZED AND TIGHTLY DISCIPLINED: THEY MAKE UP THE HARD CORE OF THE LEFT WING OF THE SPD AND REPRESENT ROUGHLY 40 PERCENT OF THE SPD'S FORMAL PARTY MEMBERSHIP (OF ABOUT A MILLION); THEIR NUMBERS (400,000 APPROXIMATELY) ARE GROWING MORE RAPIDLY THAN THE TOTAL SPD MEMBERSHIP. THE JUSOS HAVE, SO FAR, FAIRLY LIMITED INFLUENCE ON NATIONAL SPD POLICY AND ON BRANDT GOVERNMENT POLICY. THE KEY QUESTION IS WHETHER THIS WILL REMAIN VALID IN COMING YEARS. MUCH DEPENDS ON THE WILL AND DETERMINATION OF THE SPD LEADERSHIP TO CARRY THROUGH A MODERATE PROGRAM THAT CAN ATTRACT THE MIDDLE STRATUM OF UNDECIDED IN GERMANY, WITHOUT WHICH NO MAJOR PARTY CAN EXPECT TO ACHIEVE A LARGE PLURALITY, NOT TO SPEAK OF A MAJORITY OF THE VOTE IN A FEDERAL ELECTION.

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6. THE RADICALS HAVE LOCAL POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN SOME AREAS WHICH IS NOT TO BE UNDERESTIMATED. THEY PLAY A KEY ROLE IN THE SOUTH HESSEN SPD AND IN THE FRANKFURT SPD. URBAN POLITICS IS, IN FACT, THE BASIS OF JUSO STRENGTH. DESPITE THEIR VERBIAGE ON NATIONAL AND FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES, THE FOCUS OF THEIR POLITICAL WORK IS ON THE CITY AND COMMUNAL LEVEL. THIS IS A BASIC POINT OF THEIR STRATEGY, FOR THEY WANT TO INFLUENCE POLICY ON HOUSING, PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION, ETC., THAT IS ON ISSUES THAT HAVE A DIRECT EFFECT ON THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF WEST GERMANY.

7. LEFT RADICALS ARE ALSO IN POSITIONS OF POWER IN SOME KEY AREAS OF GERMAN SOCIETY, ESPECIALLY THE SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES. WHILE MOST OF THE FRG'S UNIVERSITIES ARE IN FAIRLY GOOD SHAPE, RADICAL LEFTISTS CONTINUE TO CONTROL THE FREE AND TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES IN BERLIN AND THE UNIVERSITIES OF MARBURG AND BREMEN. RADICALS ARE ALSO STRONG IN CERTAIN FACULTIES IN HEIDELBERG, FRANKFURT, MUNICH AND REGENSBURG. THESE ARE AMONG THE MORE IMPORTANT UNIVERSITIES. MOREOVER, MARXIFICATION OF THE CURRICULA IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN SUCH KEY AREAS AS THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND TEACHERS TRAINING. LEFTIST TEACHERS, AND ATTEMPTED MARXIFICATION OF THE CURRICULUM ALSO POSES A PROBLEM IN SOME ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, PARTICULARLY IN HESSEN. IN ADDITION, THERE IS, OVER AND ABOVE THE JUSOS, SOME RADICAL YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS SDAJ (GERMAN SOCIALIST WORKERS YOUTH--24,000 MEMBERS) AND

MSB SPARTAKUS (4,400 MEMBERS). AS THE RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN FRANKFURT HAVE SHOWN, THESE RADICAL YOUTH GROUPS ARE ABLE TO MOBILIZE A LARGE NUMBER OF SYMPATHIZERS WHICH GRANTS THEM POWER FAR BEYOND THEIR OWN MEMBERSHIP FIGURES.

8. THERE ARE ALSO ANARCHIST TERRORIST ACTIVITIES, ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE BAADER MEINHOF GANG HAVE NOW BEEN ARRESTED. THERE IS A RADICAL PRESS, PRIMARILY ON THE LEFT END OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, BUT IT DOES NOT SEEM TO BE FARING AS WELL NOW AS IT DID SEVERAL YEARS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AGO. THERE ARE RADICAL LEFTIST ELEMENTS IN THE TRADE UNIONS. THIS IS NOT YET A MAJOR PROBLEM, ALTHOUGH IT COULD BECOME SERIOUS IF THE LABOR LEADERSHIP DOES NOT ASSERT ITSELF TO CONTROL THE DRIFT TOWARD THE LEFT. BUT, TAKING RIGHT AND LEFT RADICALS TOGETHER, THEIR NUMBERS ARE NOT GREAT. THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR RECENTLY ESTIMATED THAT THERE ARE A TOTAL OF ONLY ABOUT 29,000 RIGHT RADICALS AND 78,000 LEFT RADICALS. THEIR NATIONAL INFLUENCE IS SLIGHT, AND THEIR GENERAL ACCEPTABILITY AMONG THE GERMAN POPULATION IS LOW.

9. BUT WHAT OF THE FUTURE? ONE HAS THE UNCOMFORTABLE FEELING THAT SOME OF THE ABOVE COULD HAVE BEEN SAID AT

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TIMES OF WEIMAR GERMANY' BUT THE FRG IN 1974 IS NOT
WEIMAR. THE PICTURE TODAY IS NOT NEARLY AS BLEAK AS
THE CDU/CSU PAINTS IT. THE FRG SOCIAL STRUCTURE IS
BASICALLY HEALTHY. THE WEST GERMAN ECONOMY IS STRONG
AND FLOURISHING. (ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES DO HAVE A

POLITICAL IMPACT; DURING THE MINIRECESSION OF THE LATE 60'S, THE RADICAL RIGHT NPD ENJOYED A SUDDEN SPURT OF POPULARITY.) MOST WEST GERMANS NOW ENJOY A GOOD AND RELATIVELY PROSPEROUS LIFE; THEY HAVE THROWN OFF MANY OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BURDENS OF THE PAST; THEY ACCEPT THE DIVISION OF GERMANY AS A FACT OF LIFE; AND THEY BELIEVE THAT THE FRG'S SECURITY IS REASONABLY WELL PROVIDED FOR BY THE US AND THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE. IT IS TRUE, OF COURSE, THAT MANY EXPERIENCE THAT PECULIAR PERSONAL DISSATISFACTION AND QUEST FOR IDENTITY WHICH SEEMS CHARACTERISTIC OF INDUSTRIALIZED SOCIETIES IN OUR TIME. BUT THERE IS NO FERTILE FIELD FOR A STAB-IN-THE BACK LEGEND OR FOR MILITARY REVANCHISM. OUR CONCLUSION IS THAT, BARRING AN UNEXPECTED ECONOMIC CATASTROPHE, EFFECTIVE POLITICAL RADICALISM DOES NOT THREATEN TO BECOME A NATION-WIDE PHENOMENON IN THE FRG IN THE FORSEEABLE FUTURE.

10. AS NOTED ABOVE, MUCH WILL DEPEND ON THE WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY OF THE SPD LEADERSHIP NOW AND IN THE YEARS AHEAD TO MAINTAIN A POLICY OF MODERATION AND REASON, TO DISTANCE ITSELF FROM LEFTIST TRENDS AND REMAIN A PARTY OF THE MIDDLE. OTHERWISE, THERE COULD BE A DRIFT TOWARD CONSERVATISM IN WEST GERMANY, WHOSE POPULATION REMAINS CONSERVATIVE TO ITS VERY ROOTS. CONSERVATISM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAS IN FACT ALREADY ASSERTED ITSELF, AS RECENT LOCAL AND LAND ELECTIONS HAVE DEMONSTRATED; AND THIS TREND TOO MAY STRENGTHEN THOSE IN THE SPD WHO ARE RESOLVED TO TRIM THE SAILS OF THE PARTY'S RADICAL WING SO AS TO BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN A POSITION OF POLITICAL POWER. WITHOUT SOME REDUCTION IN THE VOCIFEROUSNESS, IF NOT THE LOCAL POWER OF THE LEFTIST RADICALS IN THE FRG, THE SPD'S PROSPECTS FOR THE 1976 FEDERAL ELECTIONS WILL BE BLEAK. AT THE SAME TIME, TOO VIGOROUS ACTION BY THE PARTY LEADERSHIP COULD CONCEIVABLY LEAD TO A SPLINTERING PROCESS, WITH THE LEFT WING ATTEMPTING TO COALESCE THE RADICAL LEFT AS A NEW PARTY. HILLENBRAND

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